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Introduction: Blood Will Out

Janet Carsten, *University of Edinburgh*

Newspaper reports from Bangkok in March 2010 described a novel form of political demonstration. Thousands of demonstrators gathered to empty plastic containers of donated blood, collected from volunteers, on the fences and gateways to government headquarters. In a rite that seemed to combine elements of sacrifice and curse, and was also clearly a transformation of forms of civic participation in blood donation campaigns, the pouring away of blood became a vividly expressive act of political opposition to the perceived illegitimacy of the current regime ('Thai protesters give their blood in election protest', *Guardian*, 17th March 2010; see also Hugh-Jones 2011; Weston this volume).

A little more than a year later, in April 2011, from a quite other part of the world, it was reported that, as prelude to Pope John Paul II's beatification, a phial of his blood would be displayed as an object of veneration by the Vatican: 'The Vatican said the blood, which had been stored in a Rome hospital, had been kept in a liquid state by an anti-coagulant that was added when it was taken from him' ('Bottle of former pope's blood to go on display', *Guardian* 27th April 2011).

The entanglement of the medical and religious encapsulated by the papal phial was further underlined by the description of how this blood had been obtained, and its potential future destinations:

The Vatican said doctors had taken a quantity of blood from the pontiff while he lay dying, which had been sent in four containers to the blood transfusion centre at Bambino Gesù hospital in Rome. Two ‘remained at the disposal’ of his private secretary, Stanislaw Dziwisz, who was later made a cardinal and the archbishop of Krakow (‘Bottle of former pope’s blood to go on display’, *Guardian* 27th April 2011).

What is blood? This volume begins from the premise that the meanings attributed to blood are neither self-evident nor stable across (or even within) different cultural and historical locations. The many meanings of blood that are captured in the essays that follow vividly attest to its polyvalent qualities and its unusual capacity for accruing layers of symbolic resonance. Whether literally present in spaces of blood donation, as in the twentieth century London or North American contexts discussed here by Whitfield and by Lederer, or indicated through elaborated metaphor as in Weston’s discussion of the deployment of sanguinary metaphors in depictions of the economy, blood has the capacity to flow in many directions. Analysing the meanings of blood in particular contexts, illuminates its special qualities as bodily substance, material, and metaphor. But, taken together, these essays also attempt to answer another kind of question: can we have a theory of blood, and what would such a theory look like? If blood, like money, seems to be more or less ubiquitous, it departs from money in lacking a well-worked seam of sociological or anthropological theory with which it is associated. This initial puzzle

suggests that, in assembling a volume on blood, we need to attend both to implicit theories of blood and to the several dispersed fields where they might be located.

The significance of blood, as the two opening vignettes make clear, is not limited to any of anthropology's classic domains: politics, religion, kinship, or even to their more recent offshoots, such as the body or medical anthropology. Rather, the interest of blood lies in its propensity to travel within, between, and beyond all of these. Its scope, in other words, requires a broad view, and returns us to the insights of foundational work on symbolism, such as that of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969a) or Victor Turner (1967). While the former drew attention to the fact that 'some objects are good to think', the latter attended closely to the links between material properties and their emotional resonance in specific contexts. In demonstrating blood's recurring but divergent significance across cultural and historical contexts, the essays collected here articulate another theme familiar from classic studies of symbolism – a tension between the 'arbitrary' nature of the sign (Saussure 1960 [1916]) and the particular power of 'natural symbols' (Douglas 2003[1970]).¹

But what kind of thing is blood? Is it an unusual bodily material, a sub-category of corporeal substance, or is it part of some larger category whose significance is not constrained by bodily features? Is it part of the person and relationships, or an object that can be commodified (Baud 2011)? Or does its uniqueness stem, as Stephen Hugh-Jones (2011) argues, from the

many spheres in which it participates, and the corollary that it is irreducible to either the category of commodity or of personhood? The connections between the essays collected here suggest that the meanings of blood are paradoxically both under- and over-determined. Seemingly open to endless symbolic elaboration, its significance appears from one perspective to be curiously open; but from another point of view, it is this very excess of potentiality that is over-determined. Not only does blood have a remarkable range of meanings and associations in English (Carsten 2011), many of these readily encompass their antimonies (Bynum 2007: 187). The essays in this volume demonstrate that blood may be associated with fungibility, or transformability, as well as essence; with truth and transcendence and also with lies and corruption; with contagion and violence but also with purity and harmony; and with vitality as well as death.

The contexts presented here are indeed wide-ranging: depictions of blood in German medieval religious and medical texts; politically-inspired portraiture executed literally in blood in contemporary India; Mormon conceptions of blood in North America; transformations in ideas about blood donation in twentieth-century Britain and North America; practices concerned with the flow and fungibility of blood, food, and water in the body among peasants in Northeast Brazil; working practices in clinical pathology labs and blood banks in Malaysia; the interpenetration of blood and finance in descriptions of trade and capitalism from Britain; and up-to-date brain imaging for medical purposes in North America in which blood

seems strangely absent. In keeping with this diversity of contexts, the contributors approach their material in remarkably different ways. While several of the contributions are historically framed, relying on both documentary and visual material, others attend to contemporary narratives about blood, and are based on close observation of particular contexts or the interplay between spoken exegesis and visual images. Some of the discussions rely on a juxtaposition of such different kinds of evidence. We hope that the range of evidence and approaches offered within and between these essays will be an added enticement for readers to engage with our subject matter.

The obvious geographic, cultural, and historical discontinuities between the sites discussed here suggest that commonalities between them might be fortuitous or far-fetched. In fact, the essays demonstrate continuities in blood symbolism where we might not expect them – in the idea that blood reveals the truth, for example, which appears in the context of medieval medical and religious texts discussed by Bildhauer, in the exegesis on portraits painted in blood of Indian martyrs for independence analysed by Copeman, in the history of twentieth-century blood-typing documented by Lederer, and in the Malaysian political rhetoric and practises of clinical pathology labs described by Carsten. But there are also discontinuities in contexts where we might perhaps expect to see similarities. For example, the two historical considerations of the twentieth-century development of blood donation and transfusion services considered here, that of Britain, discussed by Whitfield, and of North America by Lederer, reveal some

very different underlying social anxieties – in the one case about class, and in the other about race among other concerns.² To take another example, the two contemporary Christian settings – that of Latter-day Saints in North America considered by Cannell, and rural Catholics in Northeast Brazil by Mayblin - reveal strikingly divergent ideas about blood. The rather ‘eviscerated’ notions of blood articulated in the Mormon case may be linked to wider Protestant precepts and iconography, while Mayblin’s analysis shows a remarkable ‘fit’ between the ideas about blood, water, and sacrifice that she elucidates and prevailing conditions of water scarcity in the local ecology. The contrast thus appears to speak to a complex interplay between historical forces and the development of Christianity in specific locations. But it also is suggestive of how symbolic registers may be elaborated (or reduced) in an implicitly contrastive logic that underlies and contributes to the historical differentiation of divergent branches of a world religion.

If discontinuities between the cases discussed here emerge as much as continuities, this might perhaps be regarded as an expected outcome of the close attention paid by the authors of these essays to the specific sites, locations, historical eras, and cultures they have studied. In this sense, the essays are separately and collectively intended as a contribution to an ‘anthropology of blood’. In drawing together the themes that unite them in this Introduction, however, I have endeavoured to foreground continuities where these emerge – perhaps partly because these seem more arresting in the face of the obvious dissimilarities between contexts. This disposition

also reflects the starting point for this collective endeavour, which was not only to grasp the cultural specificities of ideas about blood, but to look for commonalities, and to understand their wider significance. Locating this discussion in a wider anthropological literature has also highlighted how, while there is much previous work that is relevant, there has been surprisingly little sustained attention given to placing this topic in a comparative frame.

In tracing the ways in which blood flows within and beyond the locations discussed in this collection, what emerges most clearly is the literal uncontainability of blood – its capacity to move between domains, including the religious, political, familial, financial, artistic, and the medical, which in other contexts are often kept separate. Delineating the contours of this uncontainability of blood, and examining how it operates, brings to light further themes that illuminate blood's particular qualities. Some are closely tied to its material attributes and its bodily manifestations, others involve symbolic or metaphoric elaboration, but often the distinctions between physical stuff and metaphorical allusion seem porous and difficult to disentangle. Some symbolic associations may refer to or resonate with others, and may also allude to physical or material qualities. A distinction between literal or material qualities and metaphorical ones is of course further undermined by the fact that, as the essays collected here show, what is claimed as the literal or material qualities of blood is itself culturally and historically variable.³ Tim Ingold's emphasis on the processual and relational properties of materials seems apt

here. 'To describe the properties of materials is to tell the stories of what happens to them as they flow, mix and mutate' (Ingold 2011: 30).

In the discussion that follows, the themes of materiality, bodily connection, contagion, violence, transformability, and vitality are associated with apparently literal or physical attributes of blood. But they may also emerge in more symbolic or metaphorical ways. So, as in the example of the Thai political demonstrations or pope John Paul II's blood with which I began, these themes segue into others that are less closely tied to blood's physical manifestations: ancestral connection, truth, morality, corruption, and transcendence. And this suggests that blood might be a productive medium through which to consider symbolic processes, metaphor, and naturalisation (see Jackson 1983; Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

The main themes of the essays have already been mentioned: blood's multiple and sometimes contradictory registers; the relation between metaphor and materiality; blood's apparent capacity to encapsulate the truth; its association with vitality. All of the essays in different ways bring together practices or discourses that might more conventionally be analysed separately, including the religious, medical, political, kinship and economic, showing how images of blood or ideas and practices relating to blood run through these, sometimes providing continuities, but also often disjunctures, of register.

In keeping with blood's tendency to flow between and beyond specific sites, the structure of this Introduction does not adhere to the bounded domains of classic anthropological texts. Through the medium of blood, we see how - as in real life - politics may merge with religion or medicine, and the lines between morality, kinship, religious ritual, and health practices may be difficult to discern. This necessitates paying close attention through these themes to the ways in which metaphors are deployed, as well as to blood's physical attributes, before tacking back to our starting point. To explore what blood is, what a theory of it might look like, or the wider processes such a theory might illuminate, we need first to delineate some of blood's distinctive features.

The materiality of blood

Anthropological analysis does not always proceed from what is hidden or obscure. Sometimes it is the most obvious features of objects or relations that call for attention. Blood has a unique combination of material properties that make it distinctive within and outside the body. Colour and liquidity are the most striking of these, but their co-occurrence and association in the body with heat, and the propensity of blood to clot, turning from liquid to solid, may be equally important to its capacity for symbolic elaboration (see Carsten 2011; Fraser and Valentine 2006). Colour was of course central to Victor Turner's classic symbolic analysis, and his discussion underlines the significance of the connection between the striking visual features of blood and its emotional resonance (1967: 88-9).

Several of the authors in this volume connect blood's material properties to the way it is symbolically elaborated in particular contexts. Bettina Bildhauer's discussion of medieval texts, building on her earlier study (Bildhauer 2006), shows how both colour and heat together are central to its medical and miraculous properties. Here we are immediately confronted with the impossibility of separating these qualities from religious notions. Medieval concepts of blood, as Caroline Bynum (2007) has shown, are bound up with ideas about the sacred and, in particular, with the miraculous eternal vitality of Christ's blood, encapsulated in powerful relics. While Christ's blood in these ideas is seen as exceptional, the blood of humans, as discussed below, holds the body and soul together. Normally hidden in the body, when it becomes visible it gives access to the truth. Because of its living qualities, bleeding is a sign of crisis. Good blood is a sign of health while either too much or too little blood in the body may cause sickness and require regulation through medical attention. Blood can thus secure life, but also be a source of danger through its lack of boundaries.

In an utterly different context – but one that is linked by the importance of Catholicism – Maya Mayblin considers the significance of blood for peasants in the drought-ridden Northeast of Brazil. She shows how blood partakes in a 'fluid economy' where its liquid property is part of a wider system of ideas in which access to water for agriculture is paramount to survival, but which also connects to religious ideas about the significance

of Christ's sacrifice. Here peasants understand themselves to be involved in their own sacrificial labour in the fields in which the water and nourishment they lose through the sweat and energy of hard work must be continually replenished. Crucially, water and food that are consumed are transformed in the body into blood. But when these villagers are unwell, their preferred form of cure is to administer sterile isotonic solution, *soro*, intravenously as a form of instant infusion that replenishes and strengthens the body. This especially pure form of liquid can be likened to the sacrificial water that gushes from Christ's side, as depicted in highly valued local religious imagery, and which is associated with the holy spirit and with life. *Soro* is understood to be particularly effective in replenishing blood that is continually depleted through everyday human sacrificial labour. Here water, food, and blood exist as transformations, or possible substitutions, of each other, and exhibit varying states of purity – a theme that is also present in Bildhauer's discussion of medieval texts, and to which I return below.

While material properties of blood are clearly central to both Bildhauer and Mayblin's analyses, they are also just one starting-point for grasping the medical and religious understandings delineated in their essays. In analogous ways, the colour and liquidity of blood might be seen to enable other practices discussed in this volume. The portraits of Indian martyrs for Independence described by Copeman that are literally (as well as metaphorically) painted in blood make use of its redness and liquid form – though interestingly, as neither quality persists outside the body, these have

to be artificially enhanced. Here the interpenetration of metaphorical and literal meanings of blood is especially dense, and the emotional resonance of these pictures rests on the complex entanglement of historical, national, political, medical, and bodily perceptions of sacrifice (see also Copeman 2009a). If Copeman's essay offers a particularly vivid depiction of how different meanings of blood evoke and amplify each other, it also powerfully demonstrates the centrality of visual and material cues to these wider resonances.

But of course blood's physical properties cannot simply be thought of as the causal factor in what is obviously a very complex web of signification. Sometimes these properties actually limit the uses to which blood may be put. Thus in the twentieth century development of blood collection for transfusion and of blood typing, discussed by Lederer and by Whitfield for North America and Britain respectively, physiological barriers to the use of one person's blood in the body of another had to be overcome. Nevertheless, as both these essays demonstrate, the fact that transfusion might result in adverse bodily reaction was itself amenable to interpretation in social and racial terms. The history of pre-modern European ideas about the links between blood and heredity shows how elements in such thinking long pre-dated innovations in blood collection (de Miramon 2009; Nirenberg 2009). Such entanglements were both persistent and amenable to historical transformation in new circumstances (see, for example, Foucault 1990: 147).

Accounts of one of the earliest experiments in animal to human blood transfusion, conducted in 1667 under the auspices of the Royal Society, in which Arthur Coga was transfused with the blood of a sheep, indicate that the religious and moral connotations of blood were very apparent to participants. Coga's assertion (made in Latin) that 'sheep's blood has some symbolic power, like the blood of Christ, for Christ is the lamb of God' reportedly 'became a topic of London wit' (Schaffer 1998: 101). While the leap from scientific experiments on transfusion to Lamb of God was taken humourously, concerns about the moral and spiritual qualities of blood permeate contemporary discussions about such experiments (see Schaffer 1998). It appears likely that, as Mayblin suggests, the liquidity of blood encourages a heightened possibility of multiple associations envisioned in terms of flow within and between bodies. But the entanglements of scientific rationalism and religious imagery also underline that the material qualities of blood are only one plausible starting point for understanding its symbolic salience.

Fungibility and substance

We are already confronted by the difficulty of containing an anthropological discussion of blood within any of its particular dimensions. Attention to its material qualities has merged with consideration of religious, political, racial, and other matters. But there is an interesting symmetry here in terms of understandings of blood within the body. The essays of Bildhauer and Mayblin underline how blood may be conceived as the transformation in the body of food that has been consumed. These are

just two instances of a culturally more widespread phenomenon, partly associated with the spread of humoral medicine, and which can also encompass other bodily fluids, such as semen and breast milk that are understood as transformations of blood (see, for example, Carsten 1997; Good and delVecchio Good 1992). Thus blood itself is not a stable entity, and its composition and quantity may be altered through adjustments to diet, blood-letting, or other means that are undertaken to achieve improvements to health and/or the proper balance of different humours.

Changes in the composition or quantity of blood in the body may be purposefully achieved but they may also be inadvertent, resulting from illness, accident, or misadventure or - as in the case of peasants in Northeast Brazil - from the sheer wear and tear of hard work. But one might say that processes of life itself and social exchange bring about such alterations. The consumption of food, breastfeeding, and sex are widely understood to have serious implications for health and well-being.

Elaborate rules governing these practices in order to maintain purity or reduce the possibility of contagion, such as those of the caste system in India, are one expression of such ideas (see, for example, Daniel 1984; Lambert 2000; Marriott 1976; Marriott and Inden 1977). The physical importance of blood within the body, and its role in supporting life, make blood an apparently obvious focus for regimes of bodily vigilance through blood-letting or other means. One might see the widespread occurrence of menstrual taboos or the negative associations of menstruation as more or less over-determined both by the significance of blood and by their

connection with processes of fertility, sex, and gender (Knight 1991; Martin 1992; Martin, this volume).

As well as being subject to transformation within the body, blood can of course also be thought to be a vector of connection between bodies or persons. This may be articulated as occurring through the transfer of sexual fluids or breast milk (both perceived as transformed blood), through maternal feeding in the womb, or through habitual acts of commensality, which are perceived to produce blood of the same kind in the different bodies of those who share food. Here liquidity seems to be a key quality, and the symbolic resonance of bodily fluids may be enhanced by the fact that that sexual intercourse, breastfeeding, and family meals are often occasions of heightened emotionality (Taylor 1992; Turner 1967). As historians and anthropologists have observed, the physical transformation understood in Christian ideas to be set in train by marital relations - in which husband and wife become 'one body' or 'one flesh' - had profound implications for ideas about marriage and marriageability in Europe (Kuper 2009; Johnson et al. in prep.). A parallel can be drawn here with a concern in Islamic contexts about the potential incestuous implications of breastfeeding in case of future marriage between those who have consumed milk from the same woman (Carsten 1995; Parkes 2004; 2005).

In many cultures, being 'of one blood' or the phrase 'blood relation' connotes kinship. While this connection might seem almost too obvious to be worth stating, and is certainly central to Euro-American ideas about

relatedness (Schneider 1980), anthropological renditions of exactly how the connection between blood and kinship is understood further afield have often been surprisingly imprecise or under-specified (Carsten 2011; Ingold 2007: 110-11).⁴ And this seems to be partly a result of the implicit conflation of Euro-American indigenous ideas with anthropological analysis of the sort that David Schneider (1984) warned against. Somewhat bizarrely, however, considering the attention Schneider paid to sexual procreation in this regard, his own usage (and that of his informants) of blood and the ‘blood relation’ in *American Kinship* was highly unspecified (Carsten 2004: 112), and this is the starting point for Fenella Cannell’s essay in this volume. As she elegantly documents, blood in North American culture – or in the sub-culture that Mormonism represents – can have many meanings, and these cannot be assumed to be historically or culturally stable.

If materiality constitutes the first set of under-theorised aspects of blood to be considered here, then kinship can be seen as a second field in which blood is often invoked but more rarely analysed with much theoretical precision. Because of the continuities between kinship and wider ideas of social connection, this is a significant lapse that inhibits understanding of the ways in which rather abstract political ideologies that draw on kinship, such as nationalism, are rendered emotionally salient (Anderson 1983; Carsten 2004, chap 6; Foucault 1990; Robertson 2002; 2012). Before returning to the power of blood as political and religious symbol, I take up

another apparently more physically circumscribed theme from the contributions in this volume - the importance of blood in medical contexts.

Donation

We have seen how the imagery of blood in kinship connection may blend ideas that have a literal referent, in terms of bodily fluids, with more symbolic or metaphorical usages. But metaphorical allusions to connections ‘in the blood’ apparently also occur in the absence of any obvious literal source. The donation and collection of blood for transfusion might then be expected to provide a rich and rather open set of opportunities for possible symbolic elaboration. Not surprisingly, anthropologists have recently turned to blood donation to explore its meanings and cultural significance (see Copeman 2009b). An emerging body of scholarship on blood donation in New Guinea (Street 2009), India (Copeman 2004; 2005; 2008; 2009a; 2009c), Brazil (Sanabria 2009), Sri Lanka (Simpson 2009), and the UK (Busby 2006; Reddy 2007) amongst other locations, demonstrates the complex ways in which blood donation both draws on and expands local practices and idioms of gift-giving, the body, political, religious, or personal sacrifice, kinship connection, and ethics. One obvious point underlined by this work is the importance of considering blood donation, not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a ‘total social fact’ – to co-opt an apt Maussian phrase.

Efforts to encourage blood donation in contexts of scarcity, as well as the declared motivations of donors, draw on ethical discourses from a

combination of religion, politics, or kinship – as conventionally delineated by anthropologists. This suggests that an analysis of the symbolic mechanisms through which blood operates needs to place the medical contexts in which blood donation occurs within this much wider frame and, conversely, that medical practices have the effect of multiplying the emotional and symbolic potential of blood (Copeman 2009a; 2009b; Hugh-Jones 2011). There is a parallel to be drawn here with organ donation, in which a shortage of available organs has been seen to potentially jeopardize the ethical management of transplantation. While attention has been focussed on ‘tissue economies’ (Waldby and Mitchell 2006), issues of ‘bioavailability’ (Cohen 2005), or the trafficking of human organs (Scheper-Hughes 2000; 2004), it is also clear that such pressures are often ambivalently experienced, for example, through the medium of family ties (Das 2010; Fox and Swazey 1992; 2002; Lock 2000; 2002; Simmons et al. 1987; Sharp 1995). Perhaps not surprisingly, the connections to donors and their families, envisaged by organ *recipients* also have the potential to be elaborated in terms of kinship, and to be understood as transforming aspects of the person. This is particularly evident in cases of heart transplants, and is apparently associated with the heart’s centrality to notions of the person and understandings of it as the seat of the emotions (Lock 2002; Sharp 2006; Bound Alberti 2010).

Blood donation seems generally to be apprehended in terms of more diffuse relations than those set in train by heart transplantation.

Nevertheless, Copeman notes the strong link between the idea that donated

blood has come ‘from the heart’ and the authenticity of the emotions flowing with donation. This is part of the efficacy of the blood portraits he describes. Blood donors I spoke to in both Malaysia and Britain often situated their acts of donation within a sequence of kinship experiences often involving histories of family illness or parental acts of blood donation (see also Waldby 2002). And in Malaysia I was told of patients who spoke of the ways their bodies had been altered following blood transfusion in line with what they assumed had been the personal or ethnic characteristics of the source of the blood they had received.

Far from bracketing off these kinds of associations, in the conditions of scarcity that pertain to the availability of blood for medical uses, publicity for blood campaigns actually relies on the emotional resonance of family ties, ill-health, and often also of national sacrifice (Copeman 2009a; Simpson 2004; 2009). Historical accounts of the establishment of blood collection and transfusion services are of particular interest in showing the articulation of medical, political, familial and other understandings of blood as they are reformulated for new purposes. The essays of Lederer and Whitfield in this volume speak to the complexity of these manoeuvres. The expansion, rationalisation, and bureaucratization of blood banking in London during the Second World War together with new technologies of pooling and fractionating blood, described by Whitfield, necessarily distanced blood donors from recipients. It was accompanied, somewhat paradoxically, by a need to make potential recipients more vividly present to donors in order to maintain adequate supplies. New forms of propaganda

featuring fictionalized stories about recipients were devised to meet this need. But how much specificity or distance was the right amount? While ideas of kinship and locality were deployed to maintain a sense of connection to recipients, Whitfield also shows how ‘strategic anonymity’ was a means to mitigate a shift from a system in which the danger of too much closeness between donor and recipient was recognized, to one where too great a distance posed a different kind of threat.⁵

During this period, in which existing class relations were perceived to be undergoing a thorough upheaval as a result of war conditions (as at least the British myth of this era would have it), it would seem that class distinctions between donors and recipients were downplayed. The stories used in publicity for blood donation are at once personalised and generic – they concern ‘ordinary men and women’, soldiers, sisters and mothers – with features or faces made unspecific by the style of illustration. Here Jonathan Parry’s (1986) acute observations about the gift – where it is only under the conditions of capitalism that there is a need to establish the fetishized category of the ‘pure’, disinterested gift – seem particularly apposite. Rhetorical allusions to a community bound by the gift of sacrifice for the nation express how the category of pure gift can be instantiated in blood donation. Richard Titmuss’s (1997 [1970]) emphasis on ‘the gift relationship’ was thus, as Whitfield shows, an accurate reflection of a response to technological changes that had occurred some decades before his study.

In the North American case discussed by Lederer, the development of blood-typing in the early to mid-twentieth century is interwoven with ideas about race together with religion and the Cold War. The scientific analysis of blood has the capacity to reveal the truth - as does blood in other cases discussed in this volume (see below). But what kind of truths are these? Here anxieties about the specificity of blood are accurately mapped onto social anxieties about racial mixing – (see also Lederer 2008; Weston 2001), while class – a focus of British anxieties - remains a more submerged feature. Religion, as Lederer shows, may blend with or be separated from racial categories. Perhaps not surprisingly, her examples include discourses about the distinctiveness of Jewish blood, which was of course a theme in medieval and early modern European texts (Bildhauer 2006; this volume; Bynum 2007; Nirenberg 2009). But she also documents the active avoidance of interracial blood transfusion, an avoidance which apparently persisted in Mormon hospitals, even after the abandonment by the 1970s of separate blood supplies for white and black patients (Lederer 2008: 197).⁶

Lederer's exposition of the development of blood typing and its capacity to blend with earlier associations of blood, can be supplemented by more recent cases of anxiety about contagion, and scandals involving contaminated blood in China, France, the US, Britain and elsewhere associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Anagnost 2006; Baud 2011; Chaveau 2011; Feldman and Bayer 1999; Laqueur 1999; Shao 2006; Shao and Scoggin 2009; Starr 1998). Thus while the donation of blood has the

power to evoke community and kinship, and this may be reinforced by medical usages and scientific typologies, its ‘symbolic overload’ has clearly not been curtailed by scientific specification. The donation of blood is, for many who are not permitted to donate, an exclusionary rather than an inclusive act (Copeman 2009a; Seeman 1999; Strong 2009). The trope of ‘bad blood’, a ‘euphemism’ for syphilis in North America carries associations that merge race, ancestry, and sexual practice (Lederer 2008: 115-6, 148). And it is precisely because of the multiple connotations of blood, and the histories of these exclusions, that being refused permission to donate is as suffused with resonance as is the act of donation.

Religion-kinship-politics

Blood donation, as we have seen, has political, religious, economic, and familial significance. Each of the themes discussed here has segued into others; blood’s capacity to flow in different directions renders its analysis peculiarly difficult to contain within any specified topic. The subtitle ‘religion-kinship-politics’ is intended to gesture to this tendency, but also to serve as a reminder that these distinct domains are analytical artefacts as well as ideological features of modernity (see Cannell and McKinnon in press; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). While this ideology may predispose us to see the compartmentalisation of realms of life, such as the clinical pathology labs decribed by Carsten, or forms of Christian worship evoked by Cannell and by Mayblin, as obvious or self-evident, attending to the manner in which blood flows within and between such domains highlights their artefactual nature. Carsten’s essay shows how, as the blood sample

travels around the clearly delimited space of the lab, it accrues and sheds different kinds of attributes which enfold moral, ethical, and kinship ascriptions that hold within and beyond the lab's boundaries. Although these boundaries are actively guarded and maintained, they are, inevitably, also porous. 'Blood flows' thus illuminate not only blood itself, but also the work that domaining does – and the limits of domaining.

In this section and those that follow, I turn from the more physical attributes of blood to its looser symbolic associations. A central paradox here concerns stability. Understandings of blood in the body, explored here by Bildhauer, Mayblin, and others, often emphasise its fungibility and its transformative potential. And Christ's blood is in Christianity attributed with transformative powers to a miraculous degree (Bildhauer this volume; Bynum 2007). The ritual of Holy Communion, or Eucharist, for many Christians, involves a literal transubstantiation of communion wine into the blood of Christ (Feeley-Harnik 1981; Mayblin this volume). The phial of Pope John Paul II's blood referred to at the beginning of this introduction, clearly partakes of a long history of miraculous and transforming blood. But blood in North American and European ideas of ancestry and descent is also generally understood to stand for permanence and fixity (Schneider 1980). Kath Weston (1995: 103) has commented on this tension in the meanings attributed to 'biological connection' and 'blood ties' in notions of kinship in North America and Europe – where, in spite of its obvious association with the changing processes of life, biology is taken to stand for permanence. Blood may also be a potent symbol of disconnection and

erasure in ideologies of kinship and ideas about family connection. Thus studies of adoption in Europe, North America, and also elsewhere show the importance of idioms of blood in articulating these disconnections, and also their permanent consequences (see Carsten 2000; Kim 2010).

In Cannell's contribution to this volume, different North American Mormon understandings of blood are carefully teased apart. Significantly, the Mormon version of the ritual of Communion with which Cannell opens her essay, involves a severely pared down reference to the Communion wine and its transformative potential. Here the symbolism of wine and blood is indicated by paper cups of water, and this can be associated with the Mormon proscription of alcohol as well as a wider history of Puritan practices and beliefs. But it also reflects an emphasis on the resurrected body of Christ, Cannell argues, and on redemption rather than the suffering body. One might say that Christ's blood has, like the Communion wine, been 'bleached' in the visual conventions of Mormon aesthetics - where the dazzling whiteness of favoured statues of Christ make a stark contrast with, for example, the visceral prominence of red blood in the Medieval images discussed in Bildhauer's essay (see also Bynum 2007) or Spanish seventeenth century religious statuary (Bray 2009).

An emphasis on whiteness, light, and simplicity does not, however, inhibit a remarkable proliferation of Mormon ideas about blood. Here the blood of ancestry is highly elaborated: the injunction to trace family genealogy coexists with the revelation to teenagers of their biblical ascription to one

of the twelve tribes of Israel in a ritual of Patriarchal Blessing. These two modes of ancestry reflect the joint importance of choice and destiny that is characteristic of Mormon eschatology. The reflections of Cannell's informants on possible interpretations of a particular ancestral ascription highlight the potentially troubling inferences of race and the ideas of permanence with which inheritance is invested. Here one senses that ideas about biblical descent are potentially in conflict with their personal and ethical implications for contemporary adherents. For some, there is unease about the connotations of these ideas - the manner in which personal agency, which is also a central Mormon tenet, may be constrained by the permanence of ancestry and ideas about race. Cannell suggests both that ideas about race are today less exclusionary than they were in the past (in line with more mainstream North American ideology), and that the ambiguities surrounding blood, inheritance, and individual agency reinforce for adherents the mystery and sacredness of kinship that is central to Mormon beliefs.

Although Cannell's informants did not speak about these matters, it is significant that, as noted above, Mormon hospitals in the United States have a history of exclusionary practices of blood transfusion in which Mormons were reluctant to take African American blood (Lederer 2008:197; this volume). This vivid exemplification of the manner in which literal and symbolic aspects of blood may flow into each other is also evident in Copeman's essay. As we have seen, the starting point for Copeman's central protagonists seems uncompromisingly literal – portraits

of Indian martyrs to Independence are painted in blood in order to evoke a strong emotional response in those who view them. Here, in a seemingly similar set of strategies to those of the Thai demonstrators described in my opening vignette, blood must be physically present to induce a reaction. But as Copeman shows, literalness also has a kind of evanescent quality - blood's colour fades; it is not necessarily clear how central the medium is to the message that viewers of these portraits perceive. In any case, blood's presence in both these cases is intended to invoke further layers of symbolic association – to the blood of martyrdom and sacrifice (see Castelli 2011; Copeman 2009a). It also serves as a reminder, or a threat, of further acts of violence and sacrifice that may be demanded in the name of the nation in the future. Here not only have religious, medical, corporeal, and political messages converged through the medium of blood, but temporal dimensions of what blood invokes in the past, present, and future have been merged so that the past is made viscerally present. Blood's literal presence is required, it seems, in order to make evident that its materiality is superseded by a plethora of higher symbolic meanings.

The truth of blood

What kind of stuff is blood? One answer given by the essays in this collection, perhaps unexpectedly, is that it is the stuff of truth. The capacity of blood to 'reveal the truth' – morally, personally, politically, and medically – is a striking theme uniting many of the contexts considered here. This emerges very clearly in Bildhauer's discussion of medieval texts where blood that becomes visible has a unique capacity to reveal the inner

state of the person, their moral purity or corruption, as well as their health. These ideas would seem to draw partly on biblical notions as well as on humoral medicine. Blood in Leviticus (17: 1-15) is described, as in the texts considered by Bildhauer, as both the animating life-force and the bearer of the soul. For this reason its consumption is proscribed in Leviticus.⁷ But we have also seen that blood's truth-bearing capacities are reflected in the twentieth-century scientific development of blood-typing in North America considered by Lederer. Here it is particular kinds of scientific, racial, personal, and moral truth that are revealed. In a parallel case, Jennifer Robertson (2002; 2012) has shown how the elaboration of discourses around blood-typing in Japan encompasses ideas about horoscopes, personality, blood donation, match-making, eugenics, and the nation. The possibility of finding true love through matching blood types, for example, or the importance of eating correctly for one's blood type, show how the nature of these truths is continually under revision depending on the social and political context as well as the state of scientific discoveries.

In the context of clinical pathology labs and blood banks in Malaysia, discussed by Carsten, the truths that blood is required to establish might be assumed to be straightforwardly medical. These are sites of diagnostic testing in which the blood sample is the most common medium for analysis. But here we see how, as bodily samples travel around the lab, they may be attributed meanings by the staff that conflate medical, personal, familial, and moral qualities. Samples and their accompanying

documentation are thus liable to accrue layers of significance that might be thought quite outside the processes and purposes of laboratory analysis. Meanwhile, in the radically different context of Malaysian public politics, the heavily contested blood sample of the *de facto* leader of the opposition, Anwar Ibrahim, arrested in 2008 under a charge of sodomy, was claimed by the government as an icon of truth, and apparently required in order to reveal his moral state. But to an increasingly incredulous Malaysian public, it seemed that this blatantly political manoeuvre might backfire - to reveal instead political corruption in high places. In this somewhat bizarre conjunction of routine laboratory testing and theatrical politics, the truths that blood may reveal are far from stable; they have the capacity to uncover further truths, and also to destabilise moral and political certainties.

The truth-bearing quality of blood appears then to give it special efficacy, as is evident in Copeman's case of Indian blood portraits. Donating blood for the purpose of retouching these paintings, like other acts of donation, attests to the truth of the donor's commitment. But here the 'symbolic overload' of blood, its capacity to be read in so many ways, suggests that any one truth already implies all the other truths that may be embodied in blood. And this may connect to the way in which blood seems in many contexts to be perceived as a kind of essence – of the person, and of their bodily and spiritual health, disease, or corruption – as is clear, for example, in the cases discussed by Bildhauer and by Mayblin.

But there is a caveat here because we should beware of essentialising blood, or of an overly reductive approach to the different cultural and historical locations considered in this volume. As Cannell and Martin show in their essays, blood may be many things even within one closely connected set of contexts. Emily Martin's arresting example of contemporary medical images in which the brain appears without blood reminds us that, even within a quite narrow frame of medical understandings, blood has many meanings. If the blood-brain barrier discussed in her essay is physiologically important in limiting the uptake of pharmaceuticals by the brain, it can also be contrasted with images of a brain suffused with blood, and in which leakages or embolisms are a potential cause of death. While the brain can be visualised as devoid of blood but with millions of neurones firing to light up fMRI scans, Martin suggests that the cerebro-spinal fluid can also be seen as a purer form of blood, dealing with the higher cognitive functions of thought and control associated with the brain. And placing this understanding of the cerebro-spinal fluid alongside Martin's earlier insights about gender and medical representations of the body in *The Woman in the Body* (1992), as she does here, provides a revealing contrast. Whereas menstrual blood and menopause were shown in this work to be associated with chaos, waste, pollution, and decay, and of course with women, blood's function here is one of nourishing the brain, and essentially maternal. But cerebro-spinal fluid is imagined as a highly refined and more male form of blood. Martin shows how this hierarchical differentiation of blood in the body is linked to purity and to gender imagery in a way that shows striking parallels with the

cases discussed by Bildhauer and by Mayblin. But she also makes clear that understandings of blood remain open to new truths of scientific discovery - for example, the prioritisation of cognition - while still retaining their salience.

Vitality and flow; containment and stoppage; metaphor and naturalisation

I suggested above that blood's apparently unique capacity among bodily substances to reveal the truth could be linked to its strong association with life itself. The idea that blood embodies the life force is evident the proscriptions of Leviticus, in Bildhauer's consideration of medieval texts, and in the practices of the Brazilian peasants considered by Mayblin, but it also occurs outside Judaeo-Christian contexts. Conducting village fieldwork in Malaysia in the 1980s, I was told that, at the time of death, 'the soul leaves the body and all the blood flows out' – even if this was not visible to the human eye. If a person died in the house, everything in the house, especially the food, became soaked with blood. Therefore food could not be cooked or consumed in a house where a death had occurred until after the funeral had taken place (Carsten 1997: 124).

Vitality in these ideas is apparently linked to the flow and liquidity of blood - to its mobility. Excessive bleeding is one obvious cause and sign of death – in this sense blood's truth-bearing capacity is incontrovertible. Images of both containment and of permeability occur in several of the contributions here. Outpourings of blood – whether induced through

purposeful acts of violence or incurred by accident - are signs of danger. And, as Emily Martin notes, stoppages of blood, clots and embolisms, are equally hazardous. But the flow of blood - or life - may also be perceived as religious sacrifice - as in practices discussed by Bildhauer and by Mayblin. In Christian contexts, such pouring out of blood may be linked to Christ's sacrifice for humanity, and the flow of blood can be a means to achieve transcendence (see Bynum 2007). Transcendence may also be sought through political acts of violence such as those considered by Copeman, or more explicit acts of martyrdom (Castelli 2011) that are also invoked in the idiom of sacrifice. The antimonies which blood encompasses here – involving life and death, movement and stoppage, health and disease, violence and peace, the sacred and the profane – make clear how its polyvalent associations extend in an extraordinary multiplicity of directions.

But even this plethora of resonances does not exhaust the symbolic idioms in which blood participates. Whereas Martin's essay, which closes this volume, draws attention to the spaces where blood does not flow, and to stoppages and blockages, Kath Weston's opening contribution is concerned with the flow of lifeblood in the financial body. Her essay lays out with wonderful precision the layered resonances of different somatic models and understandings of blood to which contemporary descriptions of the economy refer. Images of 'lifeblood', 'circulation', 'flow', 'liquidity', or 'haemorrhaging' in the financial system resonate with understandings of blood in the body. While the circulatory model discovered by William

Harvey in the early seventeenth century is predominant here, Weston shows how older notions that pre-date Harvey's model, may also be called upon, involving, for example, ideas about stagnation of the economy and the blood-letting that is necessary to deal with it. As well as demonstrating the pervasiveness of sanguinary images in depictions of the financial system, and laying out an archaeology of somatic models, Weston's essay confronts the central problem of this volume – the issue of metaphor.

How should we understand the widespread occurrence of metaphors of blood, and what is their significance? Together with other contributors in this volume, Weston places the term 'resonance' alongside metaphor, but she also includes other figures of speech and literary device, such as analogy, allegory, and synecdoche in her analysis. The multiple resonances of blood, she suggests, which are evident in all the cases described here, enable a kind of ricochet effect, in which resonances referred to through linguistic means pile in on each other, but without requiring the primacy of one particular set of references or idioms to be specified or even suggested. Thus in the case she describes, the 'naturalness' of the organic analogy in finance is so deeply and historically embedded in patterns of language as to pass without question, and indeed one effect is to obscure the fragilities, instabilities, and inequalities of the financial system itself.⁸ While one might object that this implies a Whorfian model of the world in which language determines thought and action, this conclusion is actually too simplistic. The significance of the bodily processes that are engaged here, the very materiality of blood, implies that there is no crude way in which

one could ascribe primacy in these processes to either the physicality of blood or to linguistic devices. Rather, the power of metaphors and images of blood rests with the constant tacking back and forth, or resonance, among the different evocations that are described in these essays.

Here it is worth drawing attention to the importance of visual imagery that is vividly exemplified in several contributions to this volume. The depictions of medieval blood (Bildhauer this volume), the blood portraits described by Copeman, or the exhortations to donate blood in wartime Britain make clear that the resonances of blood are captured visually as much as through language. While blood's visible qualities are important to its emotional resonance, and neither of these has to be expressed in words, it also clear that what anthropologists may assume to be metaphorical or symbolic allusions to blood may actually be experienced in a more literal manner. Mayblin observes that a crucial quality of blood is that it can function as both metaphor and metonym – and this is central to theological debates about the Christian Eucharist (see Bynum 2007). The importance of Holy Communion to many Christians, including her informants, is that it literally makes the blood of Christ present. In this sense, the link between Christ's sacrifice and their own daily sacrifice of labour is tangible. In Copeman's essay, the real presence of blood is shown to be in such complex play with its multiple symbolic resonance in acts of sacrifice for the nation that its materiality might seem almost surplus to requirements. In fact, however, his analysis shows how what he calls the 'iconic' and the 'aniconic' aspects of the portraits (the

representation of the martyrs and the physical presence of the artist in their blood) is a crucial part of the mimetic efficacy they seek to inspire.

Weston, drawing attention to this interplay of signification in multiple directions, emphasises ‘the generative possibilities of blood, as well as its ability to pre-empt debate as it naturalizes social processes, and perfuses multiple domains’.

Metaphorical and material aspects of blood are thus in constant communication with each other (see Fraser and Valentine 2006; Laqueur 1999). With reference to Thai demonstrators’ use of blood as political protest, the suffusion of blood imagery in depictions of the economy, as well as the blood portraits discussed by Copeman, Weston adopts the term ‘meta-materiality’ to convey that what is invoked goes beyond both metaphor and the material – but also, and simultaneously, relies on both the material and the metaphorical to generate further resonances and further naturalisations.⁹

The significance of this meta-materiality is highlighted if we juxtapose Weston’s material with Martin’s images of a ‘bloodless brain’ where descriptions of brain physiology are shown to be deeply entangled with metaphorical allusions of blood. Depictions of the human brain analysed by Martin are suffused with layers of resonance to a hierarchical and gendered body. They thus also evoke an earlier anthropological literature on the way perceptions of nature itself provide material for metaphor-making (see, for example, Leach 1976; Lévi-Strauss 1966 [1962]; 1969b

[1949]; MacCormack 1980; MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Ortner 1974; Wagner 1975). Images of blood thus not only have a naturalising power, but depictions of nature itself can both partake of the ‘meta-materiality’ of blood and also contribute to it. And this further reinforces Weston’s point about the ricocheting effects between different resonances of blood.

The political corollaries of these processes are worth pausing over. Laying out a theory of metaphor from the perspective of cognitive science, Dedre Gentner et al. (2001) place metaphors and analogy in a single frame. Distinguishing conventional metaphors from novel ones, they introduce the idea of ‘the career of metaphor’ (2001: 227). Eventually, they argue, metaphors become so conventionalised that the sense of metaphoricity disappears and one of polysemy remains. These authors note that ‘the term *metaphor* can also apply to systems of extended meanings that are so familiar as be almost invisible’ (2001: 240, italics in original) – though, importantly, this does not imply any lack of affective power. Blood might be a case in point. The more entangled its multiple resonances and metaphorical allusions become (both historically and between domains that are in other contexts actively kept separate), the more difficult it is to prise them apart, or to subject arguments and assumptions into which they are enfolded to political or analytic questioning.

Conclusion: genes and vampires; multiple temporalities of blood

Emily Martin's depiction of hierarchies of blood in the body that can be linked not only to ideas about purity and gender, but also to scientific discoveries, is worth probing further. It suggests - as does Weston's depiction of the different somatic models folded into imagery of the financial system - that blood is capable of simultaneously conveying multiple temporalities. We have seen that this idea is also present in Copeman's analysis of blood portraits of Indian martyrs for Independence, where pasts, present, and possible futures converge through the material medium of blood.

In fact, the possibility of such different temporalities being present in blood is indicated in other contributions to this volume. The technological advances in blood typing and transfusion medicine that are probed by Lederer and Whitfield do not necessarily entail the abandonment of older ideas about transfers of blood but must accommodate and co-exist with these - partly to ensure the maintenance of the available supply of blood. Cannell's exposition of different ideas about blood and ancestry among North American Latter-day Saints, similarly, shows a remarkable coexistence and persistence of ideas that can be traced to different historical periods, but also the potential for the balance between these to change. And in Mayblin's evocation of the enthusiasm with which peasants in Northeast Brazil have incorporated intravenous rehydration fluids into pre-existing ideas about the body and religious sacrifice (thus speeding up or short-cutting the transformative potential of sacrifice), or in Carsten's depiction of the way blood samples in clinical pathology labs in Malaysia

may accrue layers of moral, kinship, and ethical meaning, we see a similar layering of the multiple historicities of blood.

How should we understand the significance of this capacity of blood to absorb and carry references to different historical eras? One part of its importance is its very implicitness – such references are evoked without words; they amplify the symbolic range of blood, and the aptitude of such resonances for naturalisation. As Copeman's example makes clear, the enhanced emotional purchase of such symbolic evocations is crucial to their political salience. Two contrasting extrapolations of blood's symbolic potential may illuminate these processes further. The first concerns new developments in genetic medicine. While advances in genetic medicine might be expected to undermine and reformulate older Euro-American ideas about kinship, inheritance, and personhood - encouraging a move to more fixed ideas of genetic essentialism (Finkler 2000; 2001) - it appears that this has only been the case to a quite limited degree. Instead, genetic understandings of disease are likely to be reinterpreted and folded back into older, familial idioms of blood and family ties (Lock 2005). As Franklin (2013) succinctly states, 'blood is thicker than genes'. Far from being displaced, it has the capacity and the resilience to absorb and acquire new meanings (see also Bestard 2009; Čepaitienė 2009; Edwards 2009; Franklin 2003; Porqueres i Gené and Wilgaux 2009; Rapp 1999).

Understanding of inheritance in terms of genetics is mainly associated with twentieth century scientific advances. Vampire spirits, in contrast, have a

rather longer and more widespread cultural presence, recorded in the literature on Greece (du Boulay 1982; 1984); colonial Africa (White 2000), and Malaysia (Carsten 1997) amongst other places. Like genes, vampires are associated in the popular imagination with blood. But instead of flowing in it, as it were, they remove human blood in order illicitly to obtain life after death. Vampires' need for the animating powers of blood thus expresses some of the antimonies we have already encountered in blood – nourishment and depredation, peace and violence, life and death. Whereas the symbolic capacity of genes seems to be heavily constrained by their lack of historical depth, vampires apparently call upon a longer historical trajectory to enrich the salience of their current manifestations. Their emergence in Europe is in fact a feature of modernity, associated with the Enlightenment, and with the spread of new scientific technologies (Luckhurst 2011). One might see the extraordinary contemporary efflorescence of vampire stories in Euro-American fictional genres partly as a reflection of recent health-related panics about contaminated blood, as well as anxiety over illicit economic and political depredations, but one could also see it as the latest manifestation of a more historically embedded set of concerns about essences and boundaries of the person, truth, moral worth, relatedness, and the religious and eschatological implications of these (Bildhauer this volume; Luckhurst xxvii-viii). Blood's capacity to dissolve different temporalities, to absorb and convey multiple historicities, renders it uniquely capable of taking on new messages and enfolding them within pre-existing cultural scripts.

The question ‘what is blood?’ posed at the beginning of this Introduction, might seem, by virtue of its cultural and historical specificity, to be unanswerable. But we have seen that, alongside the multiplicity of contrasts, distinctions, elaborations and resonances, there are some remarkable continuities: blood, in many of the contexts encountered here, is life and truth, and it also encompasses the very opposite of these. Its over-determined polyvalence and plasticity can be linked to its importance as bodily substance, its material qualities, and its changeable and transformative propensities.

I have suggested two further questions for consideration: Can we have a theory of blood? And what might such a theory help illuminate? In attempting to answer these questions, I referred at the beginning of this essay to a contrast between blood and money. Whereas there is a long history of social science writing on money, the anthropology of blood has tended to be dispersed across many sub-fields, and its theoretical significance has on the whole remained rather implicit. But there is another point to this analogy, which we can now reclaim. Money, like blood, flows between domains – indeed that has been seen as its very purpose - and like blood too, it is often vested with transformative and generative powers (Bloch and Parry 1989). The symbolic potential of money partly rests on these capacities. Significantly, however, as Weston’s essay beautifully shows, financial systems and markets may themselves be envisaged in the idiom of blood. If money partakes of the symbolic potential of blood, this implies a hierarchy of symbols, and that there is perhaps something about

blood that endows it with a greater symbolic power. The essays in this collection suggest that this is linked to its material presence and physical qualities, its association with life itself, its extraordinary range of resonances, and the way these may be both literally made present or symbolically evoked in order to generate further associations. Indeed, we have seen that depictions of nature may both partake of and contribute to the meta-materiality of blood. Blood, in other words, has a naturalising capacity which it may lend to money. The potent metaphor of blood banking illustrates, as Weston notes, the two-way traffic of such processes: the naturalisation that blood enables can be extended to money, and thence reimported into the realm of technologised blood donation and circulation (see also Weston 2001).

The qualities of blood depicted here and its range of resonances are associated with a heightened propensity to evoke emotional responses. We have seen how blood has the potential to carry multiple historicities, and to dissolve the distinctions between past, present, and future. As the opening vignettes of the blood used by Thai political demonstrators or the blood of Pope John Paul II exemplify, the more such resonances pile in on each other, the more they have a self-replicating and over-determined power to propel further meanings. Life and death; nurturance and violence; connection and exclusion; kinship and sacrifice – the associations can multiply, flowing between apparently incommensurate domains in a quite uncontainable manner. Not least, they may be purposefully evoked in the rhetoric of familial, racial, ethnic, or national exclusion, and as calls to

violent action. Partly because they can enfold long and layered histories in a quite implicit way, these idioms apparently have an exceptional emotional force. The essays in this volume suggest many reasons why understanding or elucidating what one might call a theory of blood matters.

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NOTES

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¹ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for *JRAI* for suggesting this formulation.

² See Krementsov (2011) for a fascinating counterpoint on the ‘socialist’ history of blood transfusion in the Soviet Union.

³ I thank Richard Fardon for this clarification and for pointing out that materiality can itself be a symbolic value.

⁴ For a longer and more general review of the anthropology of bodily substance and the connections between substance and relatedness see Carsten (2011). That the existence of such connections should not be assumed has been emphasised by Bamford (2004; 2007; 2009). See also Carsten (2001); Edwards (2000); Sahlins (2011a; 2011b); Thomas (1999).

⁵ The echo of discussions of marriage and affinity in the anthropological literature in cases where finding a spouse who is neither too close nor too distant is a paramount concern is striking here (see, for example, Busby 1997; Carsten 1997, chap. 7).

⁶ On the entanglements of blood, race, kinship, and heredity see also Foucault (1978: 147-50); Porqueres i Gené (2007); Stoler (1992; 1997); Wade (1993; 2002; 2007); Williams (1995). As this work shows, it is not necessarily the case even in European ideas that blood connotes immutable essence rather than being subject to change through various environmental influences.

⁷ I am grateful to Jessica Spencer for drawing the relevant verses of Leviticus to my attention.

⁸ But it is worth noting Marx's depiction of the nature of capital 'that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks' (1974 I: 224).

⁹ Fraser and Valentine (2006) also discuss the co-production of the symbolic and material aspects of blood and its 'agentive' properties, while Laqueur (1999: 6) has commented on the significance of the 'hyper-material quality' of blood – the fact that it is 'relentlessly material' as well as being overburdened with meaning.

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